



News from Congressman

Tom Lantos

**12th Congressional District of California
San Mateo/San Francisco**

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FOR INFORMATION CALL
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Lantos Decries Threats to Funding of HIV/AIDS Research

Washington, DC – Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA) today called on the Bush Administration to stop the circulation of a list of federally-funded researchers of HIV/AIDS in California and nationwide, while a conservative religious group is ratcheting up pressure on the Administration and members of Congress to revoke funding for studies on the list.

“The days of blind judgmentalism in connection with HIV/AIDS should be long gone,” Lantos said. “It is disgraceful that while men, women and children around the world are dying from this disease – more than three million of them last year alone – research to prevent its spread could be jeopardized by people with narrow and ideological motives.”

Lantos noted that 17 scientists at the University of California, San Francisco are on the list of more than 150 projects supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on human sexuality, behavior that puts health at risk, and the transmission of the virus that causes AIDS. The UCSF projects range from stopping the spread of diseases overseas to reducing risky conduct among U.S. teens.

The Washington DC-based Traditional Values Coalition, an organization claiming a membership of 43,000 conservative church-based groups, has taken responsibility for compiling the list. But there remains some doubt about how the coalition obtained NIH information and whether federal officials have helped put the list into the hands of activists, Republican members of Congress and authorities at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which oversees the NIH.

“I am aghast at every aspect of the issues raised in this situation,” Lantos wrote today to HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson. “It is appalling that such a list could gain credibility as it is circulated among federal government and Congressional offices, prompting concerns that the funding for these projects could be revoked for ideological reasons. I am disturbed that this list would be used to bring pressure against respected researchers working to improve and protect health care.”

Some UCSF scientists report that since the list came to light, they have gotten anonymous phone calls, along with inquiries from officials in Washington casting doubt on the security of their funding. The Traditional Values Coalition has just announced that it will ask the Justice Department to investigate what it called “the questionable NIH grant approval process.”